

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2-3, 6 and 11-12 is noted with appreciation. In order to place these claims in condition for immediate allowance, claims 2 and 6 have been rewritten into independent form incorporating the substance of parent claim 1 but deleting any reference to the nominal tension, since the Examiner objected to that language. Accordingly, claims 2-3, 6 and 11-12 should now be in condition for allowance.

The abstract has been revised in accordance with the requirement by the Examiner.

Claims 4-5 stand rejected under 35 USC 112, first paragraph. Applicants submit that the persons of ordinary skill in the art would be fully enabled by the specification to practice the subject matter defined by claims 4-5. In this regard, it should be noted that the language of claims 4 and 5 has been accepted in corresponding United States patent 6,033, 331. See claims 3 and 4 thereof. In practice, a power transmission belt is not an all-purpose off the shelf device, but is designed, manufactured and sold for a specific drive system that has a nominal length. So, the nominal length of the drive system that the belt is designed for is a characteristic parameter of the belt. Persons of ordinary skill in the art have a complete understanding of this aspect of power transmission belts, and therefore would fully understand how to determine the length of a belt and the nominal length of a drive system. With regard to the rejection of these claims under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, is believed to be clear that the ISO standard 9981 defines how the belt length is measured, and that this test standard uses a test bench.

With regard to claim 1, the Examiner has objected to the phrase "very small nominal tension or almost without any tension" as being unclear. The meaning of this expression is given in the specification at page 7, line 33 to page 8, line 7. It should be evident from this description that this corresponds to a winding operation under the lowest possible tension, it being understood that some very low or almost null residual stress cannot be avoided due, for example, to the weight of the strands. In view of the complete explanation given in applicants' specification, it is submitted that this phrase has a sufficiently clear and ascertainable meaning to persons of ordinary skill in the art.

Claims 1 and 7-10 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over EP 381,281 in view of Richmond. The Examiner notes that the phrase "very small" and "almost"

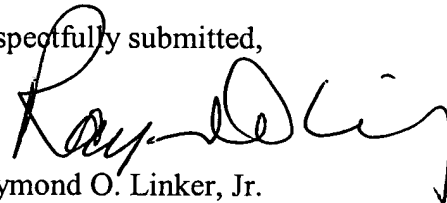
are subjective and relative, and consequently it appears that the Examiner has simply disregarded this aspect of applicants' claimed invention. For the reasons given in the previous paragraph, it is submitted that the aspect of using low or nearly no tension has a clear and ascertainable meaning, and therefore this terminology should be given weight in claim 1 as a distinguishing feature over the prior art.

In addition, the Examiner contends that it is inherent for a curing and cooling process to be carried out without any tensioning process in order to increase the elastic properties of the belt. This statement is not based on any prior art document, and it is also inaccurate. In a conventional process, there is always a pressurizing of the mold which entails tensioning of cords during the vulcanization (curing) step. For these reasons, as well as the reasons stated in detail in applicants previous response, the claimed invention clearly distinguishes over the prior art relied upon by the Examiner. This prior art neither teaches nor remotely suggests a belt having a combination of features defined in claim 1 and the claims dependent therefrom.

Favorable reconsideration by the Examiner and formal notification of the allowability of all claims as now presented are earnestly solicited.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray O. Linker, Jr.", written over the typed name.

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Janet F. Sherrill